MAY 2007

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

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MUSEUM DIRECTOR
Alice Cerniglia

INFORMATION
Published Seven Times A Year
From September-May.

Museum On Main Street
500 N. Main Street at Beakes Street
Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

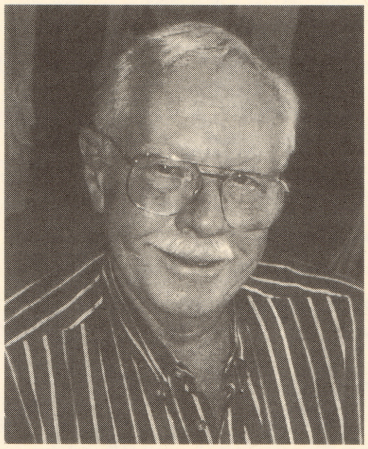
Phone: 734.662.9092
Email: wchs-500@ameritech.net
Web Site:
www.washtenawhistory.org

Annual dues: January-December individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER • RICHARD L. GALANT, PhD

Special Recognition

On Wednesday, May 16, the Washtenaw County Historical Society will be holding its Annual Meeting at the Dexter Area Museum in Dexter. We look forward to our members participating in a tour of Gordon Hall and then attending the Society's annual meeting and pot luck supper.



Roy T. Reynolds: 1936-2007
Photo courtesy of Ruth Reynolds

For me, the annual meeting marks one year since I assumed the responsibility of president. I believe that the Society's most important successes over the last year have been fivefold: first, the program series that Ralph Beebe (Vice President and Board Member) prepared over the last year; secondly, the exhibits that Alice Cerniglia, our Museum Director, coordinated; thirdly, the leadership of Susan Kosky (Board Member) in planning for the upcoming 150th year celebration of the Society; fourth, the diligent work of Judy Chrisman (Recording Secretary and Board Member) and Pauline Walters (Corresponding Secretary and Board Member) in preparing and disseminating each ***Impressions*** over the past two years; and fifth, the work of Patty Creal (Treasurer and Board Member) in keeping the accounts accurate and the Society solvent. The special talents and commitment of these individuals make the Society thrive and preserve the historical lore of our county.

In addition, I wish to recognize the work of the other members of the Society's Board of Directors who have made many unsung contributions, including garden work and serving as docents. They are Rosemarion Blake, Ann DeFreytas, Tom Freeman, Susan Nenadic, Jay Snyder, Susan Cee Wineberg, and Cynthia Yao.

Finally, former board member Roy T. Reynolds, who passed away in February, should be given special recognition for his time and work on the Board. Roy will be missed. *Requie-scat in pace.*

Now, as one Wash-tenaw County Historical Society year ends and another begins, the Society continues its commitment to preserve the county's on-going history. We hope you will be a significant part of it.

Seeking Newsletter Person

Alice Ziegler was the person responsible for the WCHS newsletter, ***Impressions,*** for over 25 years. She was followed by Susan Wineberg who redeveloped the masthead and style of the newsletter and, many times, increased the content to up to fourteen pages. After five years, Susan "retired." For the past two years, Pauline Walters and Judy Chrisman have been putting the newsletter together.

We are looking for someone to take over the newsletter. Duties consist of: attending, recording and transcribing the six monthly programs on the third Sunday of the month; gathering and editing articles from contributors; preparing a list of upcoming events; and organizing all articles and pictures for the layout person.

The WCHS board is willing to consider paying a modest sum for the production of each month's issue. We estimate that it would entail around 20 hours monthly. Issues are published in September, October, November, February, March, April and May.

Interested persons can contact Pauline Walters at 734-223-8357 or Judy Chrisman at 734-320-4816 or email us at wchs-500@ameritech.net.

Restoration of Dixboro United Methodist Church

Last year on Sunday, May 21, the Society held its annual meeting and potluck at the Dixboro United Methodist Church. As part of the meeting we received a tour of the church and a talk about their plans for a restoration/ renovation of the steeple and the interior. As a follow-up to that tour, on Sunday, April 15, 2007, Ilene Tyler, architect for QUINN EVANS ARCHITECTS gave a presentation about the work that has gone on in the past year. The following is a summary of that talk.

Superior Township was mapped in 1815-1819. The village of Dixboro was platted in 1826 and recorded in 1828 with a parcel of land reserved for a future church and school. The decision to build the church was made in 1857 and it was completed in 1858 at a cost of $2,500. The bell was added in 1912. The earliest photo of the church, taken in 1916, shows a three-section steeple.

1916 photograph of Dixboro United Methodist Church

Church *ca.*1925

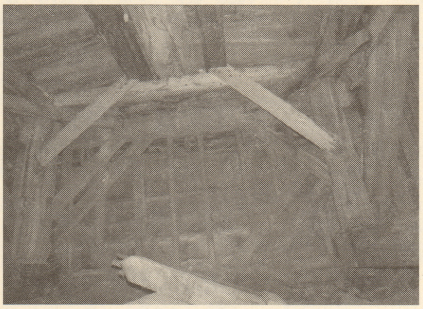
Church showing T-shape addition

Around 1925, the tower was shortened to two sections, possibly because a storm or because of deterioration found when a new roof was put on.

Other changes made over the years include: pews added in 1889 and replaced in 1969; interior updated in 1944; a T-shaped addition added in 1950; an education wing constructed in 1969; porch addition on the front of the church added sometime before 1976.

QUINN EVANS ARCHITECTS was hired for the new project based on their appreciation and understanding of preservation of an historic building. The goal was to update the worship space while retaining the historic look and feel of the sanctuary and to restore the steeple.

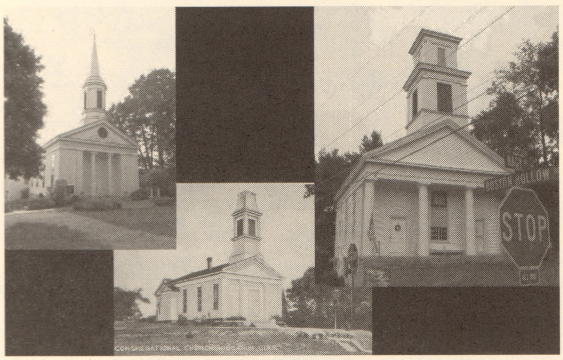
Before a plan for the steeple could be devised, the condition of the existing sections of the steeple had to be surveyed. There was a discernible lean to the north, rotted exterior boards and, of course, the missing top section. It was found that the steeple weight cantilevered beyond the floor beams and was held by mortise and tenon diagonal bracing. This caused structural weakness which resulted in the lean seen from outside. The framing of the interior of the middle section appeared cobbled together which may have been added when the bell was installed.



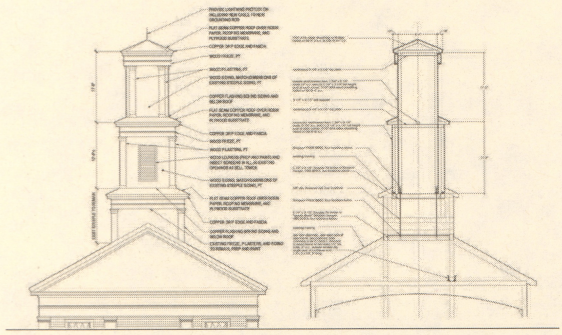
Cobbled together framing of mid-section of steeple

There was staining indicating past leaks and potentially rotted timber. Insect damage, which often occurs from the inside out, was not visible initially but was found when the wood was probed during preparation for the restoration work.

Since there was only one good photograph of the upper section of the steeple, it was necessary to design a solution to approximate the historical information. The original upper section was probably square with clipped corners giving the appearance of an octagon in the historic photograph. New England churches of a comparable style were studied in order to create a design solution compatible with the original design.



Three New England churches showing comparable exterior styles

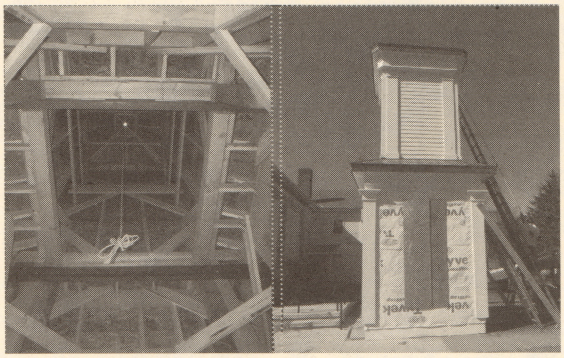


Architectural drawing of structural solution

The middle and top sections of the steeple were assembled on the ground under a blue tarpaulin to protect the work area and as a deterrent to vandals and thieves.

The new upper section has a copper roof and fascia and no openings. The new middle section has louvers so the bell can be heard. The structural frame is a modern system that is anchored to the base section at the roof creating an historically appropriate steeple. Finish carpentry replicates historic trim and corner pilasters.

As an aside, Tyler indicated that someone had gone to the trouble of breaking the lock on the door to the shrouded steeple to enter and steal the copper wire for the lightning protection when it would have been quite simple to just cut the tarp.



Structural system designed to anchor to steeple lower section

While work was progressing outside on the steeple, others were working inside to refurbish the sanctuary. An objective was to improve circulation between the balcony and the basement and to keep the narthex area quieter. The small closet and stair at the back were removed in order to reconfigure the stairs.

The original middle section of the steeple was dismantled. The remaining structure needed to be tied down and stiffened. New wood and steel was used to replace the rotted timbers and overall strengthen the timber frame. New posts and beams were inserted and attached to post that go all the way to the basement to transfer loads without the cantilever thus improving the structural integrity. The rest of the attic area was in good condition. Catwalk planks and a rail were added to provide safe access to modern light fixtures.

The back wall was simplified-instead of four openings there is now only one. The new modern stairs to the balcony were planned so they do not block the viewing panels from the narthex and to satisfy the building code.

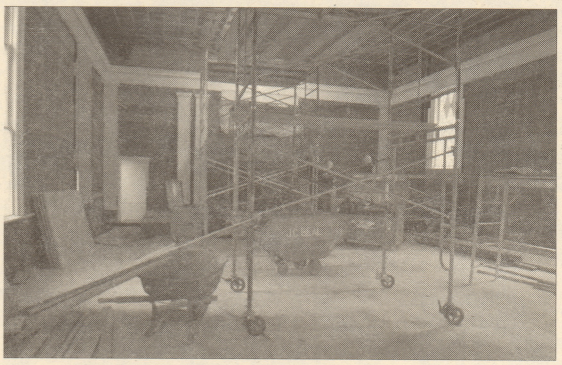
Demolition of narthex area

In the sanctuary itself, plaster was removed down to the original wide board interior sheathing. The wall boards, anywhere from 4" to 16" wide, were originally provided by local saw mills and some still have bark on them. When the acoustical ceiling was removed, a noticeable deflection in the center of the original ceiling was discerned. Therefore, it was necessary to hang drywall from a grid a few inches below the original ceiling. The walls were also dry walled, keeping the 1940s frieze and repositioning the pilasters behind the altar. Since the acoustical ceiling was removed, acoustic panels were added to the new walls.

Steeple hidden under tarpaulin next to church

The barrier wall around the altar platform was removed and two pews in front were removed to allow for barrier free seating.

New modern stairs to balcony



Wide-board interior sheathing visible after removal of plaster

Reconstructed interior looking from rear toward altar area

The center aisle was retained and all the pews were refinished. Pict. 58

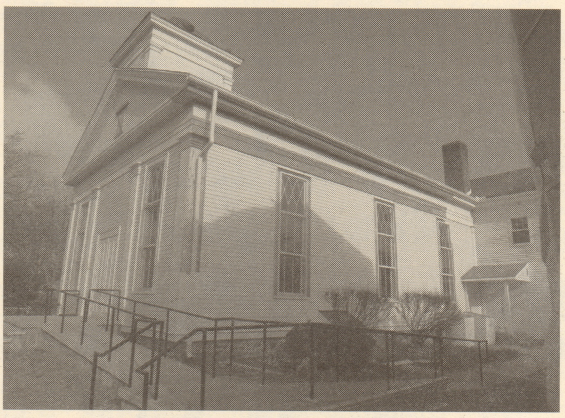
The windows were a challenge because the glass in each was different - a mix of colors, texture and placement of glass in the historic wood window frames. A new color scheme using a common design for all eight windows was devised.

On the exterior, cellulose insulation was sprayed between the wood studs and OSB sheathing was added. Pre-finished Hardie-Board siding that simulates the original clapboard was installed over a felt underlayment.

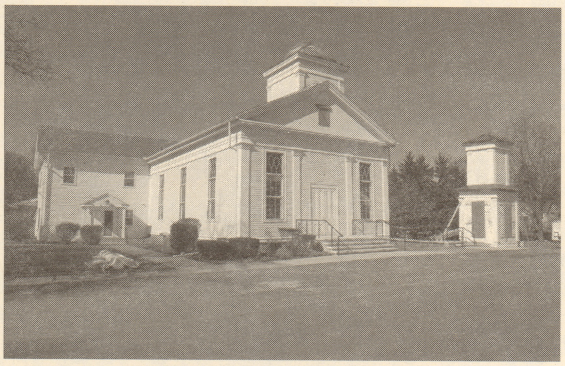
One other challenge had to be met to improve the barrier-free access. A ramp was needed for access from the office/educational wing. This problem was solved by constructing part of the ramp in the hallway on top of the original floor and cutting the rest of the ramp into the floor within the timber frame in the sanctuary.

The existing ramp to the front door was in poor condition and there was a three-inch step up at the threshold. A new poured-in-place concrete ramp up to the inside floor level was constructed, and the existing porch and steps topped with new concrete. New railings were also installed to satisfy barrier free and building code requirements.

Due to freeze laws which delayed the arrival of the crane to hoist the steeple and very windy conditions, the steeple had not been raised at the time of the talk. The steeple was raised successfully on Tuesday, April 17 shortly after 7 a.m.



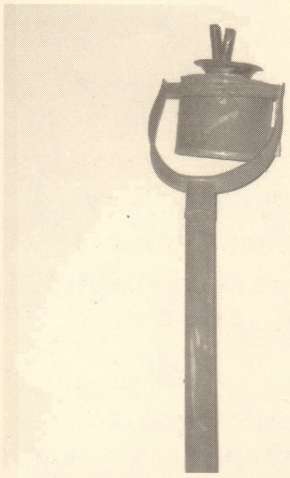
Exterior of church showing new ramp and railings

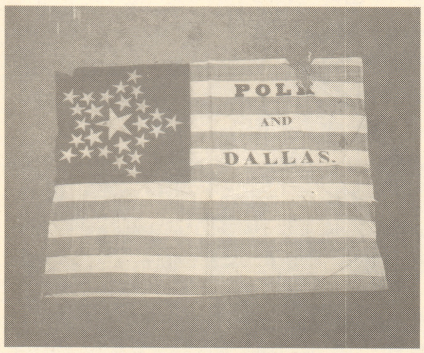


Church with finished steeple waiting to be raised

Steeple in place

Photos 1-14 provided by Ilene Tyler.
Photos 15-17 by Judy Chrisman





TOP: Torch carried by Charles Chapin during Lincoln campaign
BOTTOM: Flag from 1844 presidential campaign

Sesquincentennial Exhibit

Wednesday, June 13 through Sunday, September 23, 2007

A committee, Alice Cerniglia, Judy Chrisman, Susan Wineberg and Cynthia Yao, is busy designing a special exhibit to celebrate the Society's 150th anniversary. The exhibit will portray the history of Washtenaw County using artifacts collected by the Society over the last 150 years. Some of the topics that will be used to tell the story are Indians, early settlement and land speculation, agriculture, ethnic groups and their influence, the county at war, politics, transportation, universities and businesses.

In addition, an area of the exhibit will tell the history of the evolution of the Society from the first meeting on December 17, 1857 to the present. The house and its original owners will also be featured.

We hope you will find time to visit the exhibit sometime during the summer or early fall.

SUE KOSKY

The Gardens at 500 N. Main

The *ca.* 1835 Greek Revival style house that accommodates the Washtenaw County Historical Society's museum, is surrounded by gardens interpreted in the 1880-1900 time frame. These mixed borders include plants such as digitalis, hollyhock, clematis, roses, boxwood, dianthus, chrysanthemum, hosta, hydrangea, spirea, lilac, lobelia, nigela, lupin, peony, poppy, phlox, clove current, iris, tulips, crocus, narcissus, aster, pansy and viola, to name just a few.

For our sesquicentennial celebration during 2007, we are planning an 1857 style garden surrounding a flagpole that will fly an 1857 U.S. flag. For this garden we have planned a carpet bed, popular in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Historically, the carpet bed involved simple geometric figures or an intricate cutout design in the yard. Harmoniously arranged ribbons of flowers that bloomed all season filled the beds. Our carpet bed will have a perimeter of one or two colors surrounding a shooting star.

A trellis from Nature's Garden in Saline and a simple concrete bench from Precast Concrete Products Inc. in Blissfield have been added to the south yard. The flagpole has been donated by David Fox of Fox Tent & Awning. We are grateful for a significant donation from the Aprill family, which helped to make our updated landscape possible.

We hope you will join us on Saturday, June 16th for the flagpole dedication ceremony, refreshments and a look at our new Washtenaw County exhibit at the Museum on Main Street.

TOP: Sue Kosky and Patty Creal preparing MoMS garden for planting
RIGHT: Preparing for installing the flagpole

Photos by Lillian Ferguson

AROUND THE COUNTY

Summertime Events

PASSPORT TO HISTORY

Time is running out. The event ends Monday, July 2, 2007. All eligible passports must be received by July 6, 2007. Those with twelve signatures qualify for the small prize which will be mailed to them. Those with fifteen signatures or more qualify for a drawing for one of three $50 gift certificates to be used at any participating museum's gift shop. The drawing will be held Sunday, July 8, 2007 at Parker Mill during Huron River Day.

COBBLESTONE FARM ASSOCIATION

Wednesday, July 4, 2007 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Cobblestone Farm Museum, 2781 Packard Rd., Ann Arbor
Celebrate the tradition of our country's independence with nineteenth century activities. Watch the web site www.coblestonefarm.org for more details.

SALINE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Saturdays, June 2, 2007 – September 29, 2007 12 noon – 4 p.m.
Rentschler Farm, 1265 E. Michigan Ave., Saline
Saline Railroad Depot, 402 N. Ann Arbor St., Saline
With the exception of holiday weekends, free Guided Tours for Individuals and for Families are offered every Saturday throughout the summer at both the Rentschler Farm and Saline Railroad Depot Museums. Groups larger than ten MUST have a reservation. To schedule groups call the numbers below at least a week ahead.
Contact: Farm: 734-769-2219; Depot: 734-429-1254
Email: salinehistory@earthlink

HISTORIC MARKERS

Saturday, June 16, 2007 5:30 p.m.
Kerrytown Area, corner of Fifth Av and Detroit St.
Dedication of historic wall plaques. Reception to follow at Farmers' Market
Donations welcome.

Saturday June 16, 2007
Juneteenth Celebration
at Wheeler Park, Summit and Fifth Avenue.
Events throughout the day.

WASHTENAW COUNTY PARKS

Sunday, June 24, 20071 to 4 p.m.
Parker Mill, 4650 Geddes Rd, Ann Arbor
Log Cabin Day
Information: 734 / 971-6337

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Sesquicentennial events Museum on Main Street, 500 N. Main St., Ann Arbor

Wednesday, June 13, 2007 – Sunday, September 23, 2007
Sesquicentennial exhibit using artifacts collected throughout the Society's 150 years to tell the history of Washtenaw County, the Society and the museum. Early settlement, county politics, agriculture, influence of ethnic groups and transportation, county at war, universities and businesses are some of the topics being explored.

Saturday, June 16, 2007
2 p.m – 4 p.m.
Dedication of flagpole and garden party: A flagpole donated by Fox Tent and Awning will be dedicated and an 1857 American flag will be raised to kick-off the Society's Sesquicentennial celebration. The garden will be planted with flowers from the period.

Sunday, July 29, 2007
2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Big Celebration party. A tent will be set up in the parking lot where light refreshments will be served.

For information on any of these events call 734-662-9092, email wchs-500@ameritech.net or check our website:
www.washtenawhistory.org

PHOTOS • PAULINE WALTERS

Digging the Museum Flagpole Hole and Hanging the 2'x10' Banners

Jay Snyder mixes cement under the watchful eyes of Dean Greb and Dick Galant.

Jay Snyder (on ladder) holds the banner in place as Ralph Beebe hands a hammer to Dean Greb.

Jay Snyder and Dean Greb check directions for mixing cement for the flagpole post hole while Dick Galant, Ralph Beebe and Sue Kosky check out the site.

Jay Snyder and Dean Greb man the ladders as Ralph Beebe hands up tools and Dick Galant observes.

Dean Greb shovels cement into the post hole while Dick Galant and Ralph Beebe make sure the post remains level. Sue Kosky and Jay Snyder observe.

Both Sesquicentennial banners have been attached to the Museum on Main Street.

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

Washtenaw County Historical Society
CELEBRATING
150 YEARS of HISTORY

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MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET SESQUINCENTENNIAL EVENTS

500 N. MAIN
AT BEAKES & E. KINGSLEY STREETS

ALL ARE INVITED

SATURDAY, JUNE 16 • 2-4 PM
DEDICATION OF FLAGPOLE

SUNDAY, JULY 29 • 2-4 PM
GRAND PARTY

INFORMATION • 734.662.9092

MEMBER 2007
NANCY KROHN
905 ROBIN RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48103-3008

Washtenaw County Historical Society

Join us in celebration!

150th ANNIVERSARY
WASHTENAW COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June 13 – September 23 2007

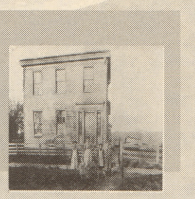

Exhibit at the Museum on Main Street
Sat, Sun, & Wed. 12—4 p.m.
734-662-9092

ALL ARE WELCOME

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

EVENTS

Flag & Garden Dedication
Sat. June 16, at 2 p.m.
Light refreshments
The Big Celebration
Sun. July 29, 2-4 p.m.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.